

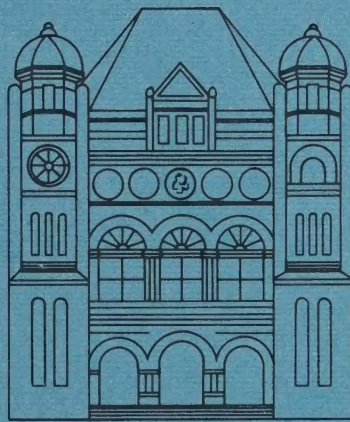
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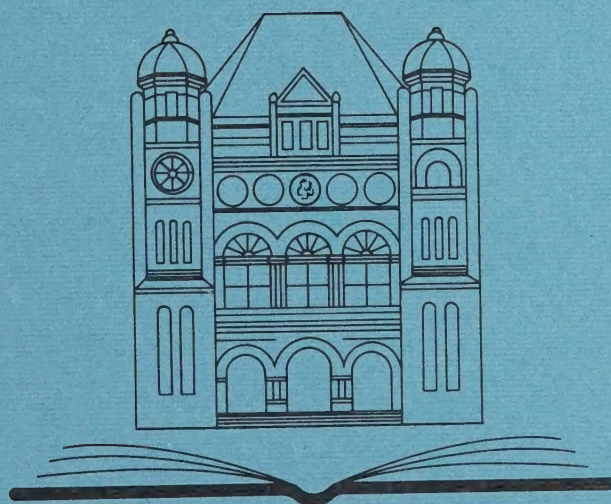
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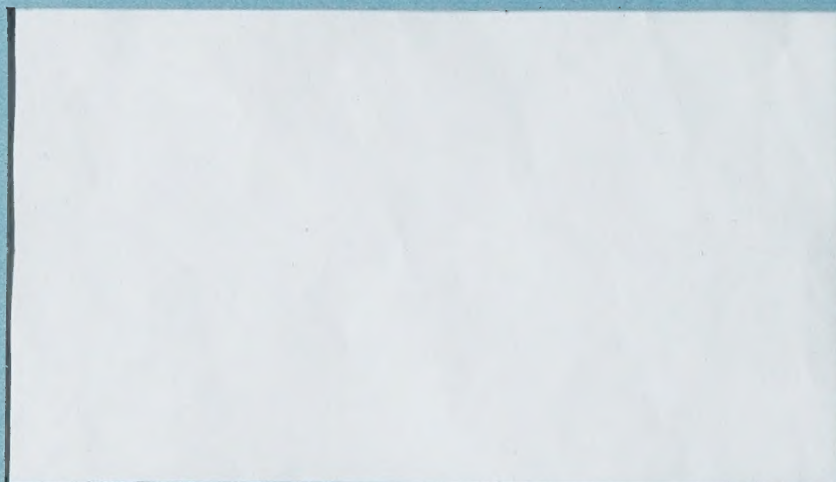
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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1978, when federal transfers for post-secondary education were shifted from a cost-shared to a block grant program (EPF), provinces have been examining their funding of the post-secondary system. This has been accelerated in the 1990s by sharp transfer cuts from the federal government and restraint programs at the provincial level. The first response to funding cuts was to increase tuition (fees are regulated by most provinces): the real cost of a year's full-time university tuition has risen 75% in real terms since 1980 on average across Canada, with most of that increase imposed since 1990.<sup>1</sup> Ontario students are seeing further increases in the 1996-97 school year of up to 20% for university tuition, 15% for college tuition; increases for university tuition average 12% across the country (B.C. and Quebec are holding fees steady).<sup>2</sup>

However, the extent to which cuts in public funding can be recouped through tuition fees is limited. Most provinces, therefore, are examining their post-secondary education systems with a view to making them more efficient, as well as more responsive to the needs of the students who are paying so much more to attend them. At the same time, skills training, and more broadly life-long learning, has been identified as one way for individuals to respond to continuing high unemployment and increasing income inequality.

Two recent provincial initiatives have begun to address the future of post-secondary education in Ontario:

- On July 16, the Ministry of Education and Training released a discussion paper outlining the current state of post-secondary education in Ontario, its changing social, economic and fiscal environment, and questions to focus discussion on its future – accessibility, fee policy and sharing of costs, and cooperation among institutions.<sup>3</sup>
- At the same time, the Minister also established a task force to examine these questions of the most appropriate sharing of costs among students, the government and the private sector; ways to promote cooperation among colleges and universities and between them and secondary schools; and what needs to be done to meet expected levels of demand. The five member Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Post-secondary Education is headed by David Smith, principal emeritus of Queen's University, and will report by December 15.<sup>4</sup>

This overview discusses how the common problem driving reform, lower funding, is being approached in other provinces. Most are examining how to better coordinate their post-secondary systems (universities and colleges or technical institutes), make credits portable, serve part-time students, and



generally make their systems more accountable to the public that funds them. However, emphases and suggested solutions vary across the country.

## NOVA SCOTIA

This small province has 13 degree-granting institutions, as well as 20 community college campuses under the administrative umbrella of the Nova Scotia Community College. Universities alone are a major component of the province's economy, providing more jobs than forestry, and only slightly fewer than fishing. However, the existence of so many small, fairly specialized institutions has come under serious scrutiny in an era of constraint.

### 1992-95 Consultations

In 1992 the province gave the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education the responsibility for developing a framework for changes in the university system. This framework was released in 1992, and indicated that the creation of a University of Nova Scotia or a University of Halifax (advocated by Dalhousie, the major university in the province) would probably not be cost-effective, but that other structural changes within the guiding principles of cooperation, transfer of credits and improved efficiency should be considered. Extensive consultations over the next two years led to the release of a green paper, *Critical Choices: The Nova Scotia University System at a Crossroads*, in October 1994.

This paper made a series of recommendations for immediate action, including:

- universities to develop a set of generic principles for academic cooperation;
- accelerated action on shared systems and services;
- agreement on movement of staff among campuses when programs close; and
- agreement on costing models.

It also presented options for governance and other issues for further discussion.

Finally, a 1995 paper reiterated some of the same points, made some specific recommendations on consolidating programs, and recommended a three-year commitment of funds by the province to the system, to allow for medium-term planning. It also addressed fees, recommending that over the next four to five years, as the province's financial commitment becomes clearer:

- tuition fees for entry-level programs should be similar across the province;
- differential fees among other programs based on cost and earning potential will be permitted; and



- universities and governments should ensure that bursaries and other assistance are available for students who cannot afford tuition.<sup>5</sup>

The Minister responded in April 1996 by committing the government to a minimum level of funding for universities through 1998-99. The universities have responded as well, with Dalhousie and the Technical University of Nova Scotia to be merged by April 1, 1997, and a consortium of metro Halifax universities seeking administrative savings.<sup>6</sup>

## NEWFOUNDLAND

Recent changes to the province's post-secondary system appear to be driven by cost-saving and streamlining goals, rather than a comprehensive approach to changing the system. The 1996 Budget made a number of relevant announcements:

- five community colleges have been merged for administrative purposes into one organization;
- the twenty-four campuses of the college system were reduced to nineteen; and
- first-year university programs (with a transfer to Memorial University for second and following years), which were available at seven colleges, are now only available in Labrador, so all other students will have to travel to St. John's for university.<sup>7</sup>

Changes to the community college system had been expected after an auditor's report questioned accountability and efficiency in the system. Declining enrollment at Memorial University will allow the students from community colleges to be accommodated, so public reaction has been muted.<sup>8</sup>

## QUEBEC

A recent discussion paper by the Conseil supérieure de l'éducation, *Réactualiser la mission universitaire*, provided an overview of problems in the system and possible solutions, though it had no specific recommendations. It discussed the appropriate role of government interventions in the university system, for example, in defining the role of the university in economic development. It also noted three general areas where universities need to clarify their goals in order to pursue future actions:

- limits on the resources of universities and a need to decide what role should be played by universities and what by other institutions in society;
- a satisfactory division of resources between teaching and research in the university; and



- the role of the university in providing a critical view of society, and how to maintain autonomy from pressures by government and other sources of funds.<sup>9</sup>

A much less detailed report by the Estates General on Education, a fifteen member commission established by the PQ government shortly after their election, reached similar conclusions. It recommended that:

- the CEGEP system be retained, with more attention paid to coordination with secondary schools and universities;
- teaching by professors be supported, and that the organization of work in universities better integrate lecturers (who do most undergraduate teaching) and professors (who do most research);
- the government create an outside mechanism to evaluate universities' performance; and
- a series of steps be taken to establish a "real continuing education system," including establishing a one-stop service point in each region to provide information on all educational programs available in the region.

The Minister recently announced the establishment of a committee to re-evaluate the financing of universities, and will be requiring all post-secondary institutions to cooperate more closely with the private sector in developing programs based on labour market needs.<sup>10</sup>

## MANITOBA

In Manitoba an agency, the Universities Grants Commission, mediates between the province and the universities in negotiating funding issues. Since 1967, the Commission has received funding requests from the universities, made recommendations to the government on overall funding for universities, and distributed whatever funds the government granted to the universities. It also has to approve any new program before it is offered by a university, after considering the need for the program and ensuring that it does not duplicate existing programs. The Commission routinely exercises this power, after a very structured consultation process.<sup>11</sup>

The success of this basic approach is demonstrated by plans for its expansion: the Minister of Education and Training has announced that universities and community colleges will both come under a coordinated system of planning and budgeting by a new Council on Post-secondary Education. This Council will take over the responsibilities of the Colleges Secretariat at the Ministry as well as the responsibilities and approach of the University Grants Commission.<sup>12</sup> The Bill creating it has received second reading in the Legislature.



These changes are the result of a wide-ranging committee report, *Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba: Doing Things Differently*, which was released in late 1993.<sup>13</sup> It recommended establishing the Council on Post-Secondary Education, as part of creating a more coordinated provincial system of post-secondary education. It also made a series of other recommendations, including:

- greater emphasis on teaching activities in hiring and promoting staff;
- periodic review of faculty competence, and clear expectations of outcomes to be included in contracts;
- improvements in overall issues of access and to distance education particularly;
- improved linkages between industry and post-secondary education;
- across-the-board undergraduate fee increases should be avoided;
- Manitoba should lobby the federal government for an income-contingent student loan repayment plan;
- tuition fees for foreign students should be double those paid by Canadians;
- community colleges should be the funding priority in the short term in the event of any grant increase from the province.

The government has adopted many of the recommendations, particularly on coordination within the system.<sup>14</sup>

## SASKATCHEWAN

The province has concentrated on its university system, and most specifically on rationalizing programs and administration between the two universities, rather than on coordination of the post-secondary system as a whole.

Two reports, on the university system generally and on coordination and rationalization, have been produced since 1993. The first made recommendations on where specific programs should be located, as well as on more general questions of access to professional programs, access by Aboriginal students, class size, quality of programs and university governance.<sup>15</sup> The second, released in September of this year, concentrated on how the two universities could rationalize programs and share administration with the goal of saving money and improving services. As a result of this process, certain agreements on coordination were reached before the report was released, and an early retirement plan was being developed. The universities have also recommended that:

- a fibre optics telecommunications link between the two universities be built as a priority;
- the government create a committee for consultations between Cabinet and the universities; and



- the government review the block funding formula which splits provincial funding between the two universities.<sup>16</sup>

Working through this process will be the major priority in post-secondary education for the provincial government in the short to medium term.

## ALBERTA

Two papers proposing changes in Alberta's post-secondary education system have been published in the last few years. The first, *New Directions for Adult Learning in Alberta*, was released in 1994. It announced, among other initiatives:

- establishing an Access Fund, \$47 million over three years, to create the equivalent of 10,000 new student places, with places awarded to specific programs fulfilling a series of criteria (innovation, accountability, partnerships with employers and regional needs);<sup>17</sup>
- increasing on-the-job training;
- improving credit transfer among colleges, technical institutes and universities;
- requiring universities to release three-year schedules of fee increases, within continued provincial regulation of fees, to allow students to plan;
- provisions to cap maximum loans and the maximum debt a student can carry at the end of specific programs;
- the establishment of a new funding mechanism to reward cost-effective, accessible programs; and
- improving accountability at the institutional level.

The new funding mechanism, a \$45 million program, requires every post-secondary institution in the province to compete for a share of this fund, based on a series of standardized performance indicators, including graduation rates, transfers to other institutions, capacity of and demand for programs, cost per student and cost per graduate.<sup>18</sup>

The second report, *University Research in Alberta: A Policy Framework*, concentrates on the university sector. It emphasizes the value to the province's economy of the research function of universities and makes a number of specific recommendations, including:

- measuring and dealing with faculty mobility;
- removing the differential tuition policy for out-of-country graduate students;
- improving inter-university coordination;
- providing additional provincial funding to university programs which receive federal grants; and
- stating the government's commitment to university research.



The relatively low priority placed by the report on the cost savings realizable through inter-university coordination in the province contrasts strongly with the recent report from Saskatchewan, noted above. The recommendation on out-of-country fees also contrasts with the approach in many other provinces. The government's response, released in May 1996, is generally positive, while emphasizing the outcomes and indicators as described above.<sup>19</sup>

Changes to the post-secondary system in Alberta take place in the environment of severe cuts in provincial transfers to most institutions in that province. Early in 1994, the Premier presented a three-year plan which, among other actions, cut transfers to colleges and universities by 14.2% over the period to 1996-97. This reduction was strongly front-end loaded, with a 10.9% cut in 1994-95 and a further 5.1% cut in 1995-96 (no change in 1996-97).<sup>20</sup>

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Policy changes in the post-secondary education system in B.C. have concentrated on integrating the system with labour market initiatives. Funding for universities and community colleges, as well as student aid, was at that time administered by the Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, a change that took place in 1994. (Coordination with the Ministry of Education was maintained by having the same minister for the two ministries and other administrative links; the province has since returned to a more traditional Ministry of Education, Skills and Training.) The major ministry initiative is Skills Now!, which addresses a mismatch between labour demand in the province and the skills available in the labour force. The major specific initiatives under Skills Now! have been:

- a requirement for a work placement in Grade 11 and career planning for Grades 8-12;
- credit links between high schools and community colleges; and
- improving access to college and university for disadvantaged groups, by increasing day care spaces, supports for students with disabilities, and Aboriginal programs.

Other components are of less direct relevance to the post-secondary system.<sup>21</sup>

More recently, in September 1996, the Minister announced a new \$5.5 million program to provide matching funds for innovative partnerships among businesses, colleges and institutes in the province. As an example, the Minister described discussions between a computer animation firm and colleges to allow students to use the company's hardware while the colleges were to provide appropriate specialized training.



## Strategic Plan

Finally, a strategic plan, *Charting a New Course*, has been released by the Ministry. It addresses the non-university post-secondary system, working towards a stronger orientation towards job training and life-long learning. Four distinct envelopes will be set up for funding the system, providing:

- basic operating grants;
- “learning partnership” funds (for marketing and developing new partnerships with business and public-sector partners);
- Learning Highway and technology innovation funds (providing capital and operating funds for programs using information infrastructure); and
- capital funding (including non-government sources of capital funding and greater use of existing facilities).<sup>22</sup>

## OTHER JURISDICTIONS

New Brunswick has an unusually independent university sector, with indirect funding on a model similar to Manitoba’s, no regulation of tuition fees, and no legal requirements for degree-granting institutions.<sup>23</sup> This may change in future, but at present there is little scope for the kind of public consultation and policy formulation that is common in other provinces. Prince Edward Island created the Office of Higher Education in 1994 to improve coordination among all post-secondary institutions on the island, including the private training industry. Yukon Territory has concentrated on improving apprenticeship training and on performance indicators for Yukon College. In the Northwest Territories, the existing college was split into two new institutions, preparatory to the division of the Territories in 1999.<sup>24</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Certain themes are constant across Canada, as provinces try to reform their post-secondary systems. Responsiveness to the labour-market needs of students, cost and accessibility, transition among secondary, college and university education, efficiency and accountability appear as issues in all the provinces that are examining their systems. Other common elements among provinces are: the establishment of committees, task forces or elaborate studies; slow, consensus-based implementation of many of the resulting recommendations; and rationalization of the number of colleges and universities, or of programs in the system. In all provinces, post-secondary institutions, as autonomous transfer agencies, will be left to bear the ultimate responsibility for operating in an environment of constraint.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Peter Small, "Tuition rates soaring as funding cut: Report," *Toronto Star*, 26 August 1996, p. A2.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, 22 October 1996 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1996), p. 1 (from Cat. no. 62-001-XPB).

<sup>3</sup> Ontario, Ministry of Education and Training, *Future Goals for Ontario Colleges and Universities, a Discussion Paper* (Toronto: The Ministry, July 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Ijeoma Ross, "Advocate of tuition fee hikes to head schools task force," *Globe and Mail*, 17 July 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education, *Shared Responsibilities in Higher Education* (Halifax: Department of Education and Culture, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Telephone interview with Peter Rans, Senior Policy Adviser, Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education, 29 October 1996.

<sup>7</sup> "A not so bright tomorrow," *St. John's Evening Telegram*, 1 May 1996, p. 4; "Nfld. cuts education spending," *[Halifax] Daily News*, 30 April 1996, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> "A not so bright tomorrow."

<sup>9</sup> Conseil supérieure de l'éducation, *Réactualiser la mission universitaire* (Québec: Le Conseil, 1995), pp. 67-69.

<sup>10</sup> Rhéal Séguin and Karen Unland, "Quebec plans education reforms," *Globe and Mail*, 25 October 1996, p. A4.

<sup>11</sup> Manitoba, The Universities Grants Commission, *Annual Report 1994-95* (Winnipeg: The Commission, 1995), pp. 9-10.

<sup>12</sup> "Post-secondary Education under the Microscope," *CEA Newsletter* (September 1996): 1.

<sup>13</sup> University Education Review Commission, *Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba: Doing Things Differently* (Winnipeg: The Commission, December 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Manitoba Education and Training, *Doing Things Differently: Response of the Government of Manitoba to the Report of the University Education Review Committee* (Winnipeg: The Ministry, June 1994).

<sup>15</sup> University Program Review Panel, *Looking at Saskatchewan Universities: Programs, Governance and Goals* (Regina: The Panel, March 1993), pp. 64-67.

<sup>16</sup> Harold MacKay, *Report on Universities* (Regina: Department of Education, September 1996), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> In the event, \$32 million of the Access Fund was spent and 10,661 new places were created; telephone interview with Marvin Abugov, Alberta Department of Advanced Education and Career Development, (403) 427-5423, 31 October 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Alberta, Department of Advanced Education and Career Development, *Fostering Excellence: A Policy Framework for Alberta's University Research System* (Edmonton: The Department, May 1996).



<sup>20</sup> Scott Feschuk, "Klein will save, Albertans will pay," *Globe and Mail*, 19 January 1994, p. A6.

<sup>21</sup> British Columbia, Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour, *Annual Report 1994-95* (Victoria: The Ministry, 1995), pp. 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> British Columbia, Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, *Charting a New Course: Executive Summary*, (retrieved from <http://www.est.gov.bc.ca/uap/data/newcours/exec-sum.htm>, 17 October 1996), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Telephone interview with Roe McFarlane, New Brunswick Department of Advanced Education and Labour, (506) 444-5504, 4 November 1996.

<sup>24</sup> All information from the relevant sections of Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Education Initiatives in Canada, 1996: A report from the provinces and territories* (retrieved from <http://www.cmec.ca/nce/nce26el.htm>, 24 October 1996).







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